



American Society of Human Genetics

ADVOCATE UPDATE

ASHG and ACMG Current and Past Presidents Oppose Gene Patenting Legislation



As reported in [June's Advocate Update](#), a draft bill in the U.S. Congress would reform Section 101 of the Patent Act to effectively allow gene patenting. ASHG promptly acted by signing onto a [multi-society letter](#) in opposition to the released draft bill.

Last month, current and past presidents of ASHG and ACMG sent the bill sponsors a [joint letter of concern](#), outlining the negative consequences the legislation would have on clinical genetic testing and genetics and genomics research. The letter states, "Allowing patents on naturally occurring genomic information would be inconsistent with the realities of basic biology and nature." ASHG is closely monitoring this issue, and will alert ASHG members of any updates on the draft bill's progress following the August recess.

ASHG President Dr. Biesecker attends International Gene Editing Meeting



August 13, 2019: ASHG President Leslie Biesecker, MD represents ASHG at the commission's first public meeting

This week, the International Commission on Clinical Use of Heritable Human Germline Genome Editing convened its [first public meeting](#). Co-chairs Kay E. Davies, PhD and Richard P. Lifton, MD, PhD led the meeting, along with an international group comprised of individuals from 10 nations and four continents in attendance. ASHG President Leslie Biesecker, MD was also on hand, and expressed his enthusiasm that the ASHG community will be able to provide feedback to the commission at ASHG's Annual Meeting this October in Houston.

He stated, "We are having Dame Kay Davies, Dr. Dzau, as well as Professor Lovell-Badge in a symposium that will gather the entire American Society of Human Genetics, and we are eager that this input can help inform some of the decisions and considerations that your group is undertaking." 2019 Curt Stern Award recipient Dr. Charles Rotimi will moderate the [forum](#) titled "Perspectives on Germline Gene Editing Regulation," taking place on Thursday, October 17, at 2pm.

New Budget Deal Raises Spending Caps

ASHG has been partnering with Research!America on a Raise the Caps campaign, aiming to increase the overall federal spending budget. On July 25, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, which President Trump has now signed into law. This new law will increase nondiscretionary spending



in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 by \$27 billion, which may allow more funds to become available for science agencies such as the NIH. With Congress now in recess, it is important to continue advocating for a \$41.6 billion budget for the NIH for FY 2020 – a \$2.5 billion increase from FY 2019. To learn more about how you can advocate with your representatives in Congress at home this month, visit [ASHG's blog](#) for suggestions and tips.

Other Congressional News



July 15, 2019: NHGRI Director Eric Green, MD, PhD addresses congressional staffers on the progresses of genomics research

- The House passed H.R. 36, the Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act, which ASHG previously [endorsed](#).
- The Society has also [endorsed](#) H.R. 2528, the STEM Opportunities Act of 2019, which aims to increase diversity in the STEM workforce.
- Last month, Eric Green, MD, PhD, Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, summarized the significant advances in genomics research in a [congressional briefing](#).